

My name is Betsy Clark, and I am a retired senior citizen who has lived in the Lansing area all of my life, presently in Bath. As some people tend to do as they grow older, I have often wondered what my legacy will be to my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I wonder what they will remember about me, and I think about the importance of speaking out about the things that really matter, so that they will know that I cared enough to try to make a difference.

I love Michigan; I love the way I can hold my hand up and show people from other states where I live (try that in Kansas); I love the way that our "mitt" is tightly embraced by the most beautiful freshwater lakes on God's earth; I love the changing seasons and the beauty of each one; I love the fact that my father, grandfather and great-grandfather loved this state and chose to live here in good times and bad; I love the fact that I can go to a state park and see bountiful wildlife and unique natural resources that most states can't even begin to imagine; and I love the way Michiganders have always fiercely protected their beautiful public lands.

However, Michigan's State Parks are struggling to stay alive. Their infrastructure is crumbling; and they are one major catastrophe away from disaster. If we refuse to do anything and our parks continue to erode with little funds to make repairs, there is always the possibility that future administrations or Legislatures could start selling off our parks. Once that happens, we will never get them back. Even when the economy comes back – and it will – the parks, the land, the wildlife, and the unique natural resources will be gone, probably used as strip malls or subdivisions that will only benefit a few, and not the public as a whole. I don't want to leave that as a legacy to my children, and I don't believe you do either.

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." And that's why I'm here today. Thank you for listening.

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